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ABSTRACT

The American Association of School Administrators believes that professional compensation programs for teachers should incorporate three goals: (1) entry level salaries should be sufficiently high to attract the top one-fourth of those choosing vocations requiring at least a bachelor's degree; (2) the plan must be sufficiently competitive to hold a competent staff; and (3) several principles must be included to assure success. These principles are that the program should be open to all who wish to compete, merit salaries should range 5 to 20 percent above those paid to similar competent professionals, evaluations should be based on measurable abilities, wide political support will be necessary to attain adequate funding, and those who will be affected should be involved in the development. Those who develop merit programs need to be aware of problems which have caused difficulty in the past. A key factor is productivity. Ultimately, a merit pay plan should be judged by its ability to assure effective education for all students. (DC)

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AASA Executive Committee Adopts Position Statement on Merit Pay

Among the recommendations of the National Commission on Excellence in Education is a suggestion that schools strongly consider a system of merit pay for teachers. Responding to the recommendation of the Commission, the AASA Executive Committee has developed a position statement on the issue. We hope this statement might contribute to in-depth district and building level discussions on the issue.

AASA Position Statement on Merit Pay for Teachers

The American Association of School Administrators believes that professional compensation **programs should be constructed to incorporate the following three goals:**

1. At the entry level, salaries should be established at a sufficiently high level to attract people from the top one-fourth of those choosing vocations requiring at least a bachelor's degree.

2. The plan must be sufficiently competitive to hold a fully competent professional staff. (Those who are presently in the teaching force who do not meet standards of competency for teaching should be given reasonable assistance over a reasonable perior of time to attain that competency. Failure to achieve competency should result in dismissal.)

3. **In order to assure success in the long term, a merit program should include these principles:**

- The program should be open to all competent professionals who wish to compete despite length of service with the school or district.
- A range from 5 to 20 percent above salaries paid to similar competent professionals should be established for merit. A similar standard is used to a great extent in business and industry.
- Evaluations should be based on measurable demonstrated ability to use knowhow and problem-solving skills to improve performance of students.
- Sufficiently wide political support will be necessary to attain the level of public funding needed. That support will flow from a public perception that student performance meets public expectations.
- Those who will be affected should be involved in the development of the plan. These groups include:

1. Those who may participate in and benefit from the plan (e.g. teachers)
2. Those who will implement and operate the plan (e.g. administrators)
3. Those who will financially and politically support the plan (e.g. parents, school board, business, and community).

Understandings

Once developed, the plan itself must be refined and improved to assure its success and to guarantee that the principles of equal opportunity and justice are upheld. Continuing political support must be maintained through continuously informing and reinforcing those who provide funding and whose educational needs are fulfilled by the plan. In the past, fulfillment of those needs has not always been adequately communicated.

Those who develop merit programs should be aware of **why some plans have encountered difficulty in the past.** Problems have included:

- Insufficient pay for all competent teachers before merit recognition.
- Insufficient merit bonuses to attract participation.
- Merit performance based on unilateral and subjective judgments versus evaluation based on measurable criteria.
- Merit that becomes permanent rather than merit that must be achieved and rewarded again and again.
- Lack of financial support because taxpayers did not know about or value the plan and its achievements.
- A lack of focus on productivity.

Productivity is a key. For merit purposes, productivity means:

- Producing more knowledge (content) at agreed-upon levels of quality.
- Producing more skills.
- Providing education for more students.
- Providing education for more difficult students.
- Improving conditions that lead to more funds or more effective use of existing funds for effective education.

Ultimately, a merit pay plan should be judged by its ability to assure effective education for all students. □

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